School Days

A themed anthology of short stories about "high school life," drawn by guest artists

Photography Junko TAKAHASHI
(selections from the photo collection "School Days" published by Shinchosha Co.)

A desk covered in carvings of scribbled names, a soccer ball abandoned in a corner of the schoolyard, an empty swimming pool a rendezvous by the bicycle stand.
Those three years of our life we spend in high school...
Why is it just those three years that keep on shining so blindingly brightly like this. ?

Guest Artist No 1 – **Mister Makoto Isshiki**

kotonoha.monkey-pirate.com

Always Together

Makoto Isshiki

Translation/Subaru QC/Sofi Editing/Kotonoha

HEY, MOKO THINGS AREN'T LOOKING TOO GOOD! IF YOU DON'T START PUTTING IN SOME EFFORT...
WHAT'RE YA TALKIN' ABOUT, IPPEI? THOUGH I GUESS I'VE BEEN FEELING A LITTLE OFF SINCE THE MORNING...
It's not easy being fat. Especially when summer gets this hot!

That's me, Momoka Noda, just a normal fat chick in high school second grade...
I'LL START WORKING HARD ONCE SUMMER'S OVER

...and this is Ippei Noda. He lives just down the street from me. We're childhood friends, classmates, and we're also distant cousins...
ONCE SUMMER'S OVER? SUMMER'S HARDLY EVEN STARTED!

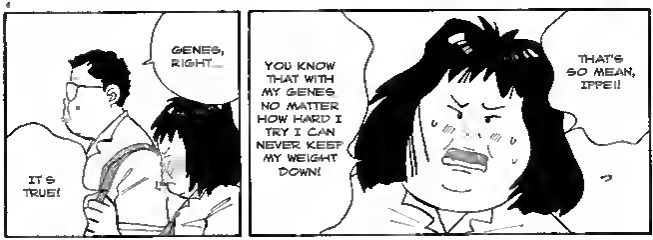
IN THE MEANTIME, YOU CAN JUST GO AND WORK HARD STUDYING OR DO WHATEVER! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTS TO GET INTO TOKYO UNIVERSITY!
I SAID, LIKE, I'LL START WORKING HARD ONCE SUMMER'S OVER
YOUR MOM IS PRETTY UPSET
EVER SINCE STARTING HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'VE BEEN WAY TOO LAZY. YOU DIDN'T JOIN ANY CLUBS, YOU SPEND ALL YOUR TIME SLUMMING AT HOME AND SLEEPING, AND YOUR GRADES ARE ONLY GETTING WORSE...!
...AND OF COURSE, HE'S A LARD BALL TOO.

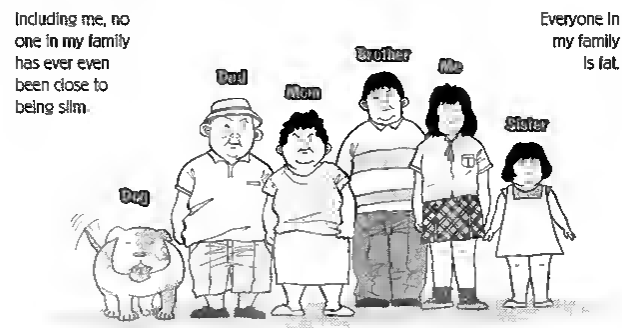
ARE THEY, LIKE, TWINS?
FOR REAL? YOU'RE KIDDING! EWW...
hah hah hah

HEY, HANG ON...
DID YOU SEE THOSE TWO?

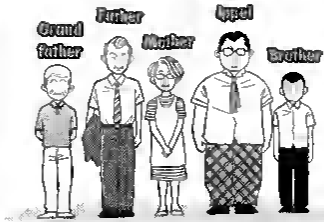
YEAH, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
OW, THAT ONE HURT

HEY, I'M FINE WITH THE WAY I LOOK
WELL THEN, LOSE SOME WEIGHT, IPPEI!
YOU SHOULD GO LOSE WEIGHT, MOKO...
LIKE, ONE FATTY STICKS OUT ENOUGH ALREADY TWO FATTIES TOGETHER, WELL...
AH WELL, WHATEVER ANYONE WHO GETS FAT ENDS UP LOOKING THE SAME ANYWAY, I SUPPOSE
The two of them were mistaken for being twins or siblings all the time


GENES, RIGHT...
IT'S TRUE!
YOU KNOW THAT WITH MY GENES NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY I CAN NEVER KEEP MY WEIGHT DOWN!
THAT'S SO MEAN, IPPEI!


Including me, no one in my family has ever even been close to being slim.
Everyone in my family is fat.
Dad
Mom
Brother
Me
Sister
Dog

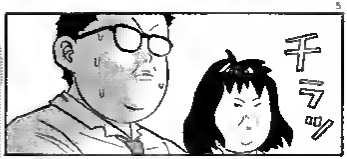
and when he was a kid he was a cute kid of normal weight too

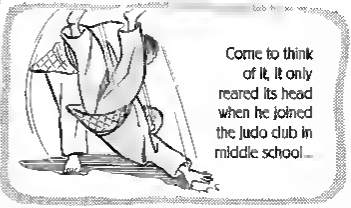


On the other hand, the only fat one in Ippei's family is Ippei...

In the second year of middle school, he won the prefectural tournament! In the third year of middle school, he even won the Nationals! He even secured a place in this high school because of his judo!

In order to become strong, one needed to increase size and body weight





Come to think of it, it only reared its head when he joined the judo club in middle school...

Him being fat is simply a leftover from the days when judo was his life.

Me, on the other hand...

From then on, he turned his attention to the academic side of things. In the course of a year, he rose to the top of the grade and got a special transfer into the Advanced Studies program. He's one amazing guy.

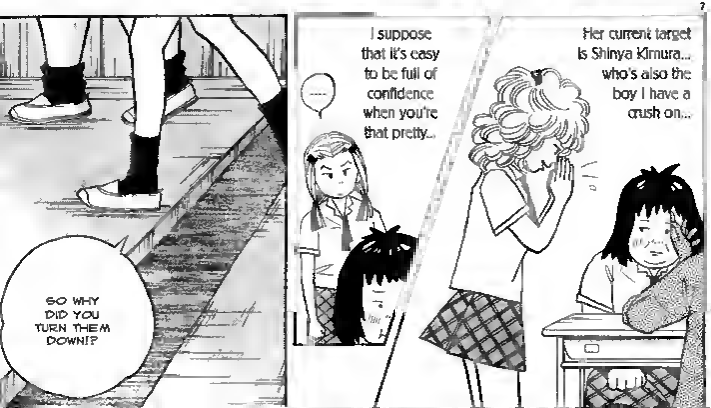
However... in his first tournament after entering high school, Ippei injured his shoulder really bad and had to give up judo!

GENES HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
WELL, AS LONG AS YOU PUT SERIOUS EFFORT IN, THAT IS.
LOSING WEIGHT? PIECE OF CAKE
YOU DON'T KNOW JUST HOW MANY TIMES I'VE FAILED WITH DIETS!
NOTHING'S GONNA WORK, SHORT OF GENETIC ENGINEERING...
IPPEI, YOU UNDERESTIMATE GENETICS
THE HORROR OF ONE'S GENES... THE CURSE OF ONE'S DNA
WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE BROADCASTING CLUB**?
GIVE IT A CHANCE, MISS NODA! IT ISN'T TOO LATE TO JOIN NOW!
私立桜高等

[private] Sakura High School

** The club responsible for broadcasts over the school PA system during lunch breaks in Japanese schools.

WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP!
IT'S TRUE! PLEASE, NODA... YOU GOTTA JOIN!
HUMPH
I WAS TOLD THAT YOU WERE A POPULAR ANNOUNCER WHEN YOU WERE IN THE BROADCASTING CLUB IN MIDDLE SCHOOL
This girl's Rina Shimoyama. She's the prettiest girl in the grade, and her dream is to be a TV announcer
THE THIRD YEARS HAVE TO LEAVE THE CLUB AFTER THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS, SO WE'LL BE DOWN TO JUST FOUR PEOPLE!

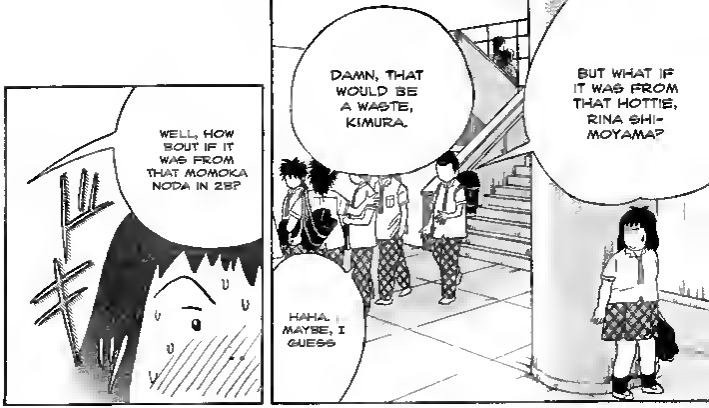

SO WHY DID YOU TURN THEM DOWN!?
I suppose that it's easy to be full of confidence when you're that pretty...
Her current target is Shinya Kimura... who's also the boy I have a crush on...

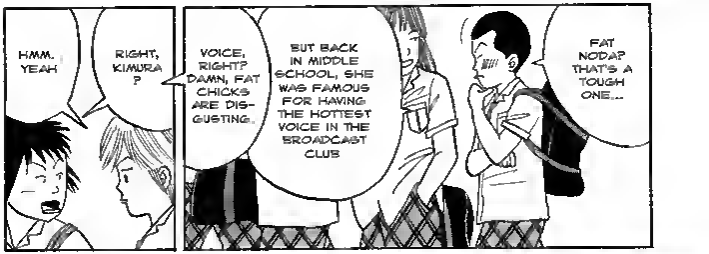
'COS... THAT'S WHAT I DECIDED... I'M NOT JOINING THAT CLUB IN HIGH SCHOOL!
THERE'S NO WAY I'M JOINING THAT CLUB!
COMPARING JUST YOUR VOICES, YOU'RE WAY, WAY, WAY BETTER THAN THAT CHI-MOYAMA!
HOW-COME?
BUT WHY?!
THAT'S WHY I REFUSE!
EVEN THOUGH I'M USED TO THAT TREATMENT, IT HAPPENED SO OFTEN THAT EVEN I STARTED FEELING DEPRESSED
Damn, she's just a fat chick
Back in middle school, there were kids who would visit the broadcast studio to see the face behind the voice.
their.
SERIOUSLY, I GUESS ALL I NEED IS A GOOD REASON...
GEEZ, YOU'RE ALWAYS LIKE THIS...
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT AFTER SUMMER...
BUT IT'S GETTING SO HOT!
IT'S JUST LIKE IPPEI SAID! YOU DON'T EVEN TRY!
IF THAT'S WHAT IT IS, JUST LOSE SOME DAMN WEIGHT!

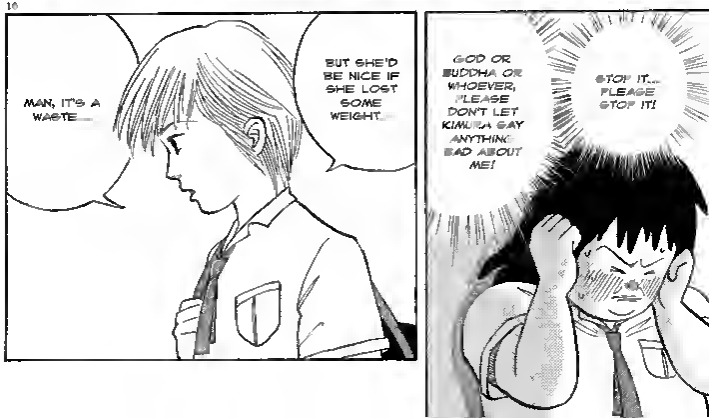
A good reason to lose weight.

appeared much earlier than anticipated.

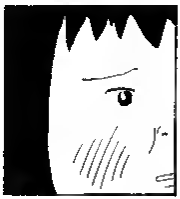
IT AIN'T YOUR BUSINESS, SO IT'S HARDLY A WASTE.
SHEESH, IGNORING IT IS SUCH A WASTE!
HUHP AH, I AIN'T GONNA DO ANYTHING
WHATCHA GONNA DO BOUT THIS ONE, KIMURA?
HEY, HAND IT BACK... IT AIN'T YOUR PHONE


WELL, HOW BOUT IF IT WAS FROM THAT MOMOKA NODA IN 2B?
DAMN, THAT WOULD BE A WASTE, KIMURA.
BUT WHAT IF IT WAS FROM THAT HOTTIE, RINA SHIMOYAMA?
HAHA... MAYBE, I GUESS


HMM. YEAH
RIGHT, KIMURA?
VOICE, RIGHT? DAMN, FAT CHICKS ARE DISGUSTING.
BUT BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHE WAS FAMOUS FOR HAVING THE HOTTEST VOICE IN THE BROADCAST CLUB
FAT NODA? THAT'S A TOUGH ONE...


MAN, IT'S A WASTE...
BUT SHE'D BE NICE IF SHE LOST SOME WEIGHT...
GOD OR BUDDHA OR WHOEVER, PLEASE DON'T LET KIMURA SAY ANYTHING BAD ABOUT ME!
STOP IT... PLEASE STOP IT!

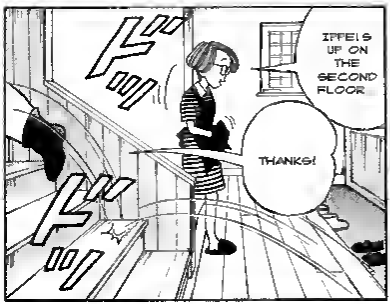
Hah, hah, hah
It's such a waste
Whaa? It's not a waste!



HUH?

such a waste.
I've been...

HI AUNTIE!
IS IPPEI AT HOME?
ガラガラ


IPPEI'S UP ON THE SECOND FLOOR
THANKS!
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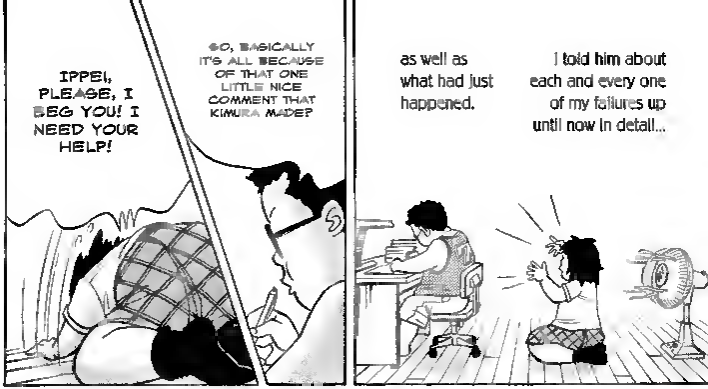
ドン

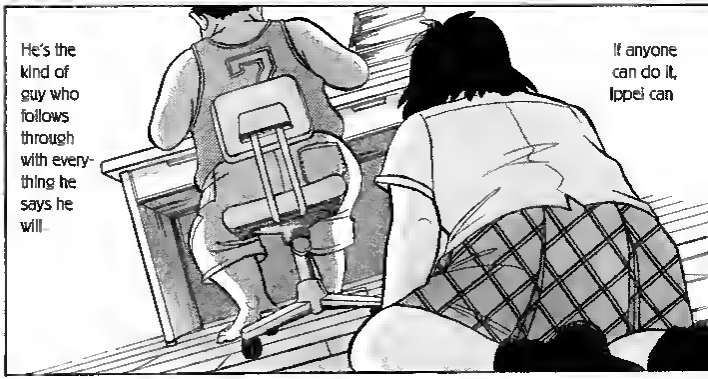
OH, HI MOKO

FROM THAT VERY MOUTH OF YOURS, YOU SAID IT!
YOU SAID IT, RIGHT?

SO, LET'S LOSE WEIGHT TOGETHER!
YEAH, I DID SO WHAT?
LOSING WEIGHT'S A PIECE OF CAKE, YOU SAID!

NO! WE'VE GOT TO DO IT TOGETHER!
IDIOT!
I'M FINE WITH THE WAY I AM
WHY TOGETHER ?
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY TIMES I'VE FAILED! OVER AND OVER
IF WE DON'T WORK TOGETHER AND COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER, THERE'S NO WAY WE'LL SUCCEED!


IPPEI, PLEASE, I BEG YOU! I NEED YOUR HELP!
SO, BASICALLY IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT ONE LITTLE NICE COMMENT THAT KIMURA MADE?
I told him about each and every one of my failures up until now in detail...
as well as what had just happened.

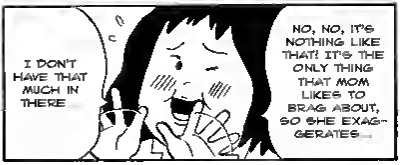

He's the kind of guy who follows through with everything he says he will.
If anyone can do it, Ippei can

PLEASE, IPPEI! I'LL GIVE YOU A MILLION YEN!
Of all the people in the world, he's the one I trust the most! Right now, that's all I have.

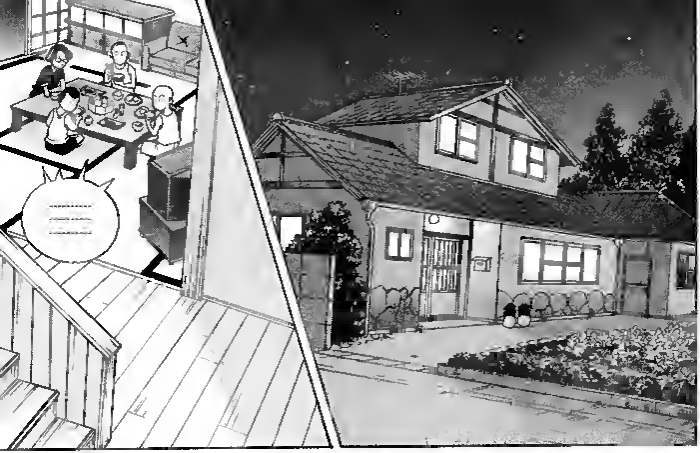
AND IF YOU LOSE WEIGHT TOO, IPPEI, EVERYONE WILL STOP CALLING YOU "OLD MAN"!
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET A CUTE GIRLFRIEND TOO!
NO, I'LL GIVE YOU TEN MILLION YEN!
IF I CAN REALLY GET THIN, I'LL GIVE YOU A MILLION YEN!
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YEAH! I'LL JOIN THE BROADCAST CLUB, AND THEN I'LL INTRODUCE RINA SHIMOYAMA TO YOU! HOW'S THAT?
15
THAT YOU'D PAY TEN MILLION YEN!
NO, I MEAN WHAT YOU SAID BEFORE THAT!
I blurted that last one out on the spur of the moment... Wow, even Ippei has a soft spot for girls like Shimoyama... Well, I'll deal with that when I get to it.
Y... YEAH.
YEAH!
RINA'S SOOOO PRETTY, ISN'T SHE!

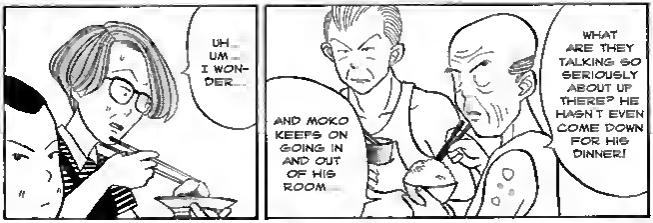
IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, YOUR MOM MENTIONED THAT YOU'VE GOT 17 YEARS WORTH OF NEW YEAR'S GIFT MONEY* AND POCKET MONEY SAVED UP IN THERE. BY NOW, YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT MORE THAN A MILLION SAVED UP IN THERE...
?

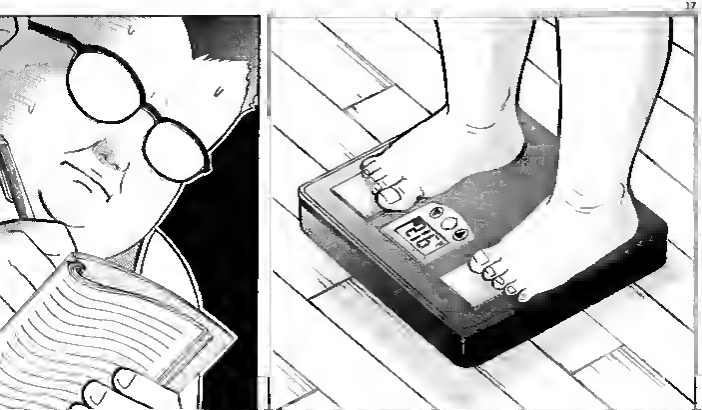
* Otoshidama, or "lucky money", this is a gift of money received from relatives and older acquaintances during the New Year period.


I DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH IN THERE...
NO, NO, IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT! IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT MOM LIKES TO BRAG ABOUT, SO SHE EXAGGERATES...

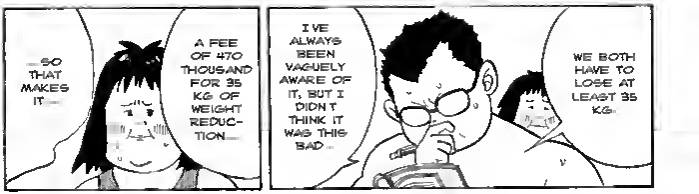
WELL THEN, IF I CAN GET YOU TO LOSE WEIGHT, GIVE ME THAT 470 THOUSAND! CONSIDER THE REMAINING THREE THOUSAND OR SO A BONUS FOR YA.
F-FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVENTY THREE THOUSAND OR SO...

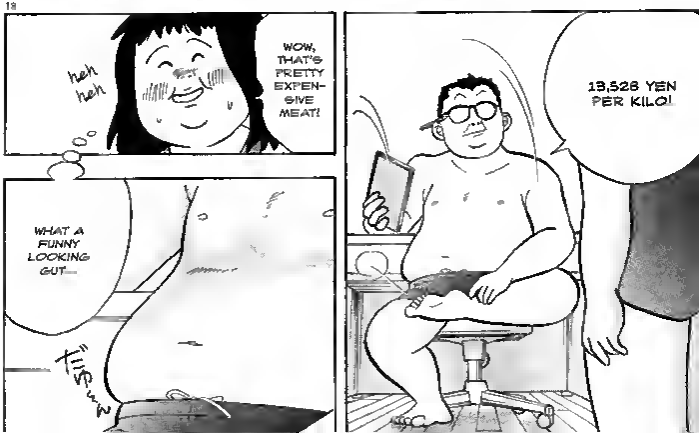



UH... UM... I WONDER...
AND MOKO KEEPS ON GOING IN AND OUT OF HIS ROOM...
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING SO SERIOUSLY ABOUT UP THERE? HE HASN'T EVEN COME DOWN FOR HIS DINNER!



420%
SET
I'M 178 CM, 110 KG, 35% BODY FAT.
OO, YOU'RE 167 CM, 91 KG, WITH 42% BODY FAT.
THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
PLEASE DON'T LOOK AT ME. IT'S NOT LIKE I WANT TO DRESS UP LIKE THIS...


...SO THAT MAKES IT...
A FEE OF 470 THOUSAND FOR 35 KG OF WEIGHT REDUC-TION...
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN VAGUELY AWARE OF IT, BUT I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS THIS BAD...
WE BOTH HAVE TO LOSE AT LEAST 35 KG.


heh heh
WOW, THAT'S PRETTY EXPEN-SIVE MEAT!
13,528 YEN PER KILO!
WHAT A FUNNY LOOKING GUT...
TUSH

LET'S WORK HARD TOGETHER!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! STOP IT!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE PICTURES, WAIT TILL AFTER I GET SKINNY!
EEK!
IDIOT.
I'M DOING THIS FOR A REASON!
OH, REALLY!
YOU JUST WANT TO USE IT TO BLACKMAIL ME!

2-4
YOU'RE KIDDING!
SO YOU'VE STARTED LIVING AT IPPEI'S PLACE?

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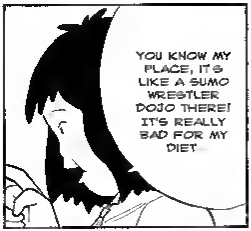
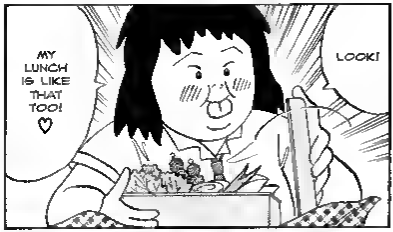
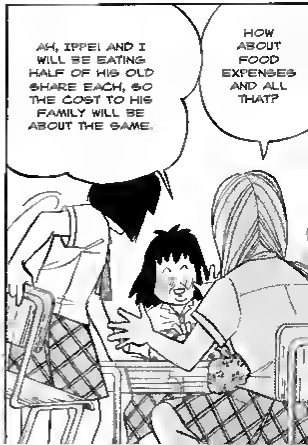

YOU KNOW MY PLACE, IT'S LIKE A SUMO WRESTLER DOJO THERE! IT'S REALLY BAD FOR MY DIET.

HALF A YEAR?!
YEAH. BUT IT'S ONLY TWO DOORS AWAY FROM HOME. I'LL BE THERE FOR HALF A YEAR.


MY LUNCH IS LIKE THAT TOO! ♡
LOOK!


AH, IPPEI AND I WILL BE EATING HALF OF HIS OLD SHARE EACH, SO THE COST TO HIS FAMILY WILL BE ABOUT THE SAME.
HOW ABOUT FOOD EXPENSES AND ALL THAT?

LOOKS LIKE YOU TWO HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT.
I SEE.

SORRY, I HAVE TO GET BACK BY FIVE TO BE IN TIME FOR GRANDPA'S BATH!
HUH?
OH NO! LOOK AT THE TIME!
BUT THE SCHEDULE FOR THE DIET IS A NIGHTMARE! HE'S LIKE A DEMON!
IPPEI'S A PRETTY DEPENDABLE GUY!
WHAT?
I GOTTA BATHE TOGETHER WITH GRAMPS FOR THE FIRST ONE!
I GOTTA GET INTO THE BATH TWICE A DAY
21
So if I bathe twice a day, it's the same as taking a 3 km jog
IT FEELS SO NICE, DOESN'T IT, GRAMPS!
OOOHH... YEAH
As a plus, each time I take a bath, I burn as much energy as I would on a 15 km run
Bathing raises one's metabolism

Having some clear goals makes it easier to keep working hard

WE'LL START OFF BY DROPPING TEN KILOS PER MONTH!

Of course calorie* intake and nutritional balance are taken into account when putting together my meals

*KCal

That helps to improve my concentration and allow measurement of brain activity

That's the plan!

Next, I do mental arithmetic until dinner time.

BUT YOU SAID HALF A YEAR, DIDN'T YOU?

YOU SAID T-TEN KILOS, SIR?

After dinner, we have 30 minutes of discussion.

WELL, FATHER WILL NOW GIVE US A TALK ABOUT WHY IT IS GOOD TO BE THIN!

パチパチ

パチパチパチ

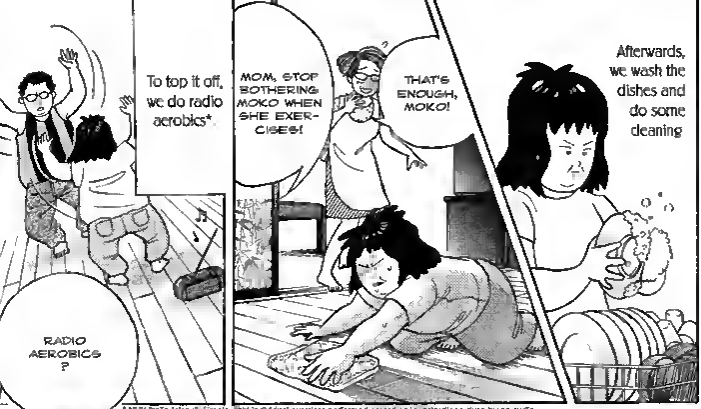
SLURP

SO FOR THIS MONTH, WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT WE KEEP TO A DAILY LIMIT OF JUST 1000 CALORIES

カキ カキ

WE'LL START OFF BY LOSING TEN KILOS TO GET A TASTE OF SUCCESS AND PICK UP SOME MOMENTUM!

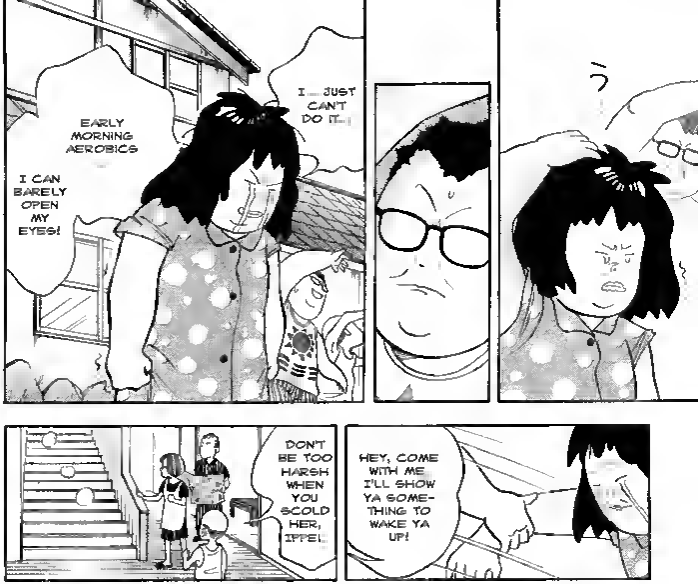
IN OUR CURRENT STATE OF OBESITY, THE FIRST TEN KILOS WILL COME OFF REALLY QUICK.


To top it off, we do radio aerobics*.
MOM, STOP BOTHERING MOKO WHEN SHE EXERCISES!
THAT'S ENOUGH, MOKO!
Afterwards, we wash the dishes and do some cleaning
RADIO AEROBICS ?

* NHK "Rajio Taisou". Simple, light individual exercises performed according to instructions given by an aerobic recording originally broadcast on NHK radio in Japan by the government-run broadcasting agency.

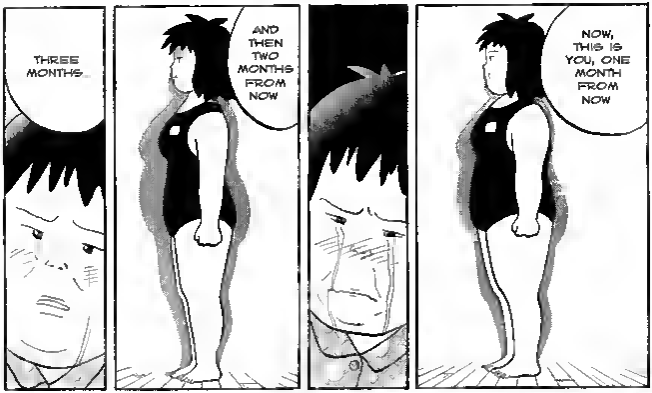
AFTER THAT IS MY SECOND BATH, AND THEN I'M INTO BED BY 12.
YEAH. WHEN YOU'RE FAT LIKE ME, YOU CAN'T DO EXERCISES THAT ARE TOO INTENSE OR DIFFICULT.

Gramps, Ippei and I, the three of us wake up at 6 and kick the day off with radio aerobics again.
LOOK AT HOW I DO IT! LIKE THIS!
MOKO! YOU AREN'T BENDING OVER ENOUGH!

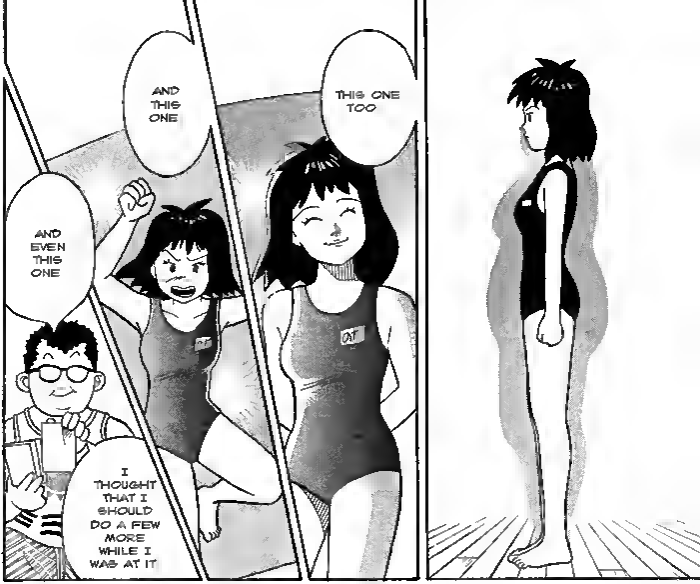

I CAN BARELY OPEN MY EYES!
EARLY MORNING AEROBICS
I... JUST CAN'T DO IT...
DON'T BE TOO HARSH WHEN YOU SCOLD HER, IPPEI.
HEY, COME WITH ME. I'LL SHOW YA SOME-THING TO WAKE YA UP!

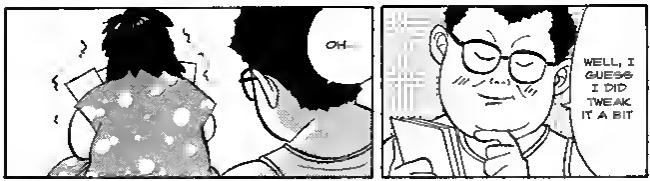
THIS IS WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE RIGHT NOW!
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS, MOKO

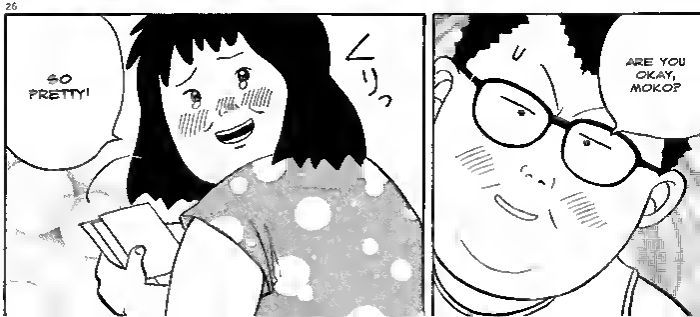
NO! I DON'T WANNA LOOK...
OPEN YOUR EYES TO REALITY! THIS IS YOU!

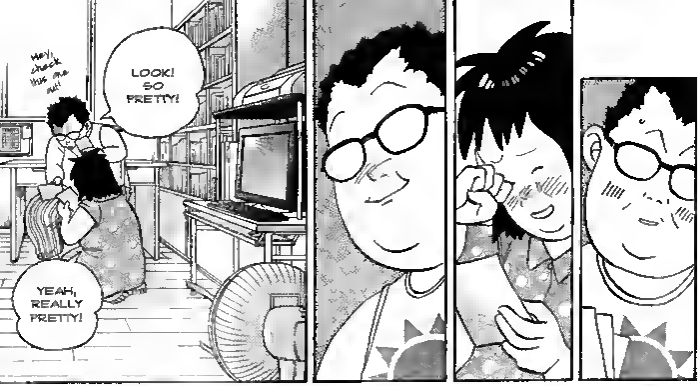

THREE MONTHS...
AND THEN TWO MONTHS FROM NOW
NOW, THIS IS YOU, ONE MONTH FROM NOW

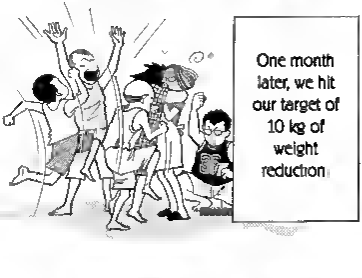
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
THIS... THIS IS ME?
I USED THAT PICTURE I TOOK OF YOU WITH MY DIGICAM AND RAN A SIMULATION ON IT.
AND FINALLY, SIX MONTHS FROM NOW...

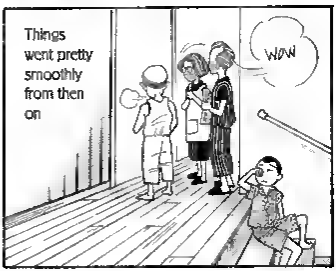

AND THIS ONE
THIS ONE TOO
AND EVEN THIS ONE
I THOUGHT THAT I SHOULD DO A FEW MORE WHILE I WAS AT IT


OH...
WELL, I GUESS I DID TWEAK IT A BIT


SO PRETTY!
ARE YOU OKAY, MOKO?


Hey! Check this out!
LOOK! SO PRETTY!
YEAH, REALLY PRETTY!


One month later, we hit our target of 10 kg of weight reduction


Things went pretty smoothly from then on
WOW

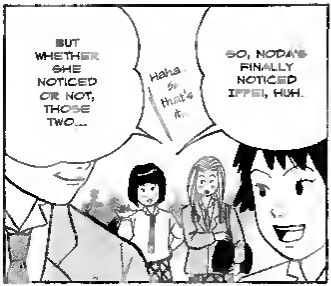
WOW, YOU'VE REALLY CHANGED HEAPS!
IF SOMEONE HADN'T SEEN YOU FOR A WHILE, THEY'D NEVER KNOW IT WAS YOU!
AND NOW...

I'VE STILL GOT A LITTLE BIT MORE TO GO!
THERE'S STILL A MONTH LEFT IN THE PLAN!

GIVE ME A BREAK, IT'S NOT LIKE THAT
SO, ARE YOU FINALLY GONNA ASK OUT THAT MAN OF YOUR DREAMS, KIMURA?
YOUR GRADES HAVE GONE UP TOO, ODA
NOT YET. I'VE STILL GOT A BIT MORE TO CHANGE, ON THE INSIDE
IT'S ENOUGH ALREADY, ISN'T IT?
Although things didn't quite turn out like the simulated pictures, it was a transformation.
SHIMOYAMA'S CHASING AFTER SOME OTHER GUY, AFTER ALL.
BUT YOU'VE GOT A GOOD CHANCE!

YEAH, ODA HASN'T FOUND HER DREAM GUY, SHE'S FOUND THE REAL THING!
YEAH, NOTHING TO DO WITH IT AT ALL!
Wow, I can even say things like that now
THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

IPPEI!
ANYWAY, I'LL SEE YA TOMORROW!
AH--
HUH? WHADDYA MEAN BY THAT?
HAHA... STOP IT, IT AIN'T LIKE THAT


BUT WHETHER SHE NOTICED OR NOT, THOSE TWO...
Haha, so that's it...
SO, NODA'S FINALLY NOTICED IPPEI, HUH.

THOSE TWO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOGETHER.
—Those school days when you notice the most important person in your life
"Always Together" - End
BIG COMIC SPIRITS Casual